

Warm Fall Days, Cool Fall Nights

These are days I now enjoy. Just a couple of years ago, this time of year was devastating to me. It was a time of year I called the beginning of the end. Somewhere around this time of year is when my wife started having neck and shoulder pain. No known cause, it would come and go. Sometimes severe, and sometimes not. It wasn't until mid November that we actually knew the cause of the pain was Cancer. I don't dwell on that as much now, I am now able to see some of the good times from that last year and other fall days and nights.

This was always the time of year for hot beverages in the evening. Tea, hot cider, coffee on occasion, and when it got just a touch of frost in the air hot chocolate would be made. This was also a time for Chili, Stews and Soups. The heat of the summer was fading, and hot meals were more desirable. Cooking didn't seem like the chore it was in the summer. Sitting close on the couch huddled under a throw, because we just didn't want to turn on the heat just yet. Making that first fire in the fireplace. Sharing wine, laughter and our own comforts. These days are fondly remembered.

Walking in the fallen leaves, breathing in that fall smell. Listening to the crunch of the leaves. Watching animals prepare for winter. Taking in a corn maze or two. One more trip to the local zoos before we had to bundle every one up. Unscheduled days off, just because the weather was beautiful that day. Memories of a special time of year.

This year finally removed some of the shadow that had fallen hard on this time of year. Maybe, just maybe some of the shadows will be lighter as the year comes back to that one fateful day.

Life goes on and some peace makes its way back in.

More Screams And Other News

Tonight, the haunted house regulars (minus one) returned to [ScreamAcres](#) following last weeks travesty of [Terror Town](#). ScreamAcres was by far the BEST attraction we have been to this year. And since a few naysayers laid the kibosh on ANY attraction site we had been planning be it a month long extravaganza or a one weekend well conceived plot, we still continue to create our own feast of fright. This time, we had more groupies with us to add to the terror. You know... the thing I enjoy most about this haunt is the fact that there were even more human actors within the corn mazes, buildings, the entire attraction. Especially if you go through more than once. Two of us made a second journey through the gallery of horror and one of us became the "go to" person for the actors to scare and they did a good job of it. They pick up on something and then go with it and tell the other actors via well hidden communication devices to play it up... and they remember us... do we stand out that well?

When I returned home, there was a message on the machine from the director of *Don't Hug Me*. Short, sweet, and to the point. "I'm sorry to tell you and you did a great job and all but we decided to go with the other three guys who tried out." Perfectly understandable. As I told a friend moments later, two no-casts out of 10 attempts in less than 3 years is not a bad percentage... correct? I'm sure the show will be a great success. Plus, I would be worried about missing the first rehearsals and trying to memorize my lines within days of being cast because I will be in Florida with some of my best friends. Better to be a little upset after getting home from

a great night rather than trying not to spoil everyone else's evening by being a bit down.

Could you send in a plumber?

They are having more [toilet problems on the International Space Station](#). Seems that the Russian made space toilet is not working. I realize that the water hunger, gravity fed toilets that work on earth would not work very well on the Space Station, but to break down twice in a short period of time is not good at all. I would really reconsider working on the space station if the main toilet is going to break every 4 to 6 months. Seems like that would be a vital function. Especially when some of the water used on the Space Station comes from recycling the waste collected in those high-tech privies.

Oh well, that massive water recycling program in use on the space station would also give me pause to send in my resume for Space Station Tech.

Where are the days when the astronauts would just play with their food in the micro-gravity situations. I miss the Jello floating in the air.

$y=mx+b$



My three day assignment that was cancelled earlier this week

would have been at the school I wound up at today. You can say it turned into a one day assignment I suppose. Oddly enough, the teacher I would have subbed for was the “team teacher” in two of the classes. In those classes I of course acted as an assistant, but I did get to teach four classes. I couldn’t let the opportunity pass by and I mentioned the three day assignment to her and she told me she just rescheduled because she didn’t like taking days off in October. I didn’t ask why, but conferences are around this time I think so that’s a possibility.

So the four classes were run pretty much the same way though they were actually two different levels. The regular math classes were working on percent markups and discounts. Given a cost and a percentage, they had to determine the final price. The other two classes were algebra. They were working on graphing equations and determining solutions from the graphs. I actually got a high complement in one of these classes. One of the students told me I taught this better than the regular teacher. I didn’t know what else to say but to just thank him. So... Besides the last class having a couple of characters in it (I expected it, being a class of just eight students, and one of the regular classes as opposed to algebra) it was another pretty good day. First period was one of the two “team teaching” period, so Just watching for the one period and seeing things not in the plans definitely helped here in keeping with the routine though I suppose being eighth grade they wouldn’t have had a tough time adjusting to a different routine if necessary.

It is now the start of a three-day weekend and time to get some rest...

Teenagers Driving You Crazy?

Then drive to Nebraska and drop them off. For good. Seems Nebraska has a “safe haven” law like a lot of states, however, they are the only ones to have neglected placing an age limit on the kids who are left at the safe havens. These laws are designed to protect the safety of unwanted infants, encouraging mothers to drop them at hospitals instead of getting scared and doing something horrible and regrettable to the babies. Most states set their age cap at 72 hours, but since Nebraska failed to set a cap, they are seeing an influx of people dropping off their troublesome teens, including people who don’t even live in Nebraska! Read about it below:

(CNN) – Frustrated parents are dumping their teenagers at Nebraska hospitals – even crossing state lines to do it – and the state Legislature has scheduled a special hearing to try to stem the tide.

A 14-year-old Iowa girl was left Tuesday at Creighton University Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska.

Nebraska’s “safe haven” law, intended to allow parents to anonymously hand over an infant to a hospital without being prosecuted, isn’t working out as planned.

Of the 17 children relinquished since the law took effect in July, only four are younger than 10 – and all four are among the nine siblings abandoned by a man September 24 at an Omaha hospital.

On Tuesday, a 14-year-old girl from Council Bluffs, Iowa, was abandoned at Creighton University Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska, just across the Missouri River from Council Bluffs. The case marks the first time a parent has crossed state lines to abandon a teenager in Nebraska, authorities said.

“The few situations we’ve seen so far demonstrate the need for a change in Nebraska’s safe haven law,” Gov. Dave Heineman

said in a statement Monday. "In the coming legislative session, I will advocate for changes that put the focus back on protecting an infant in danger. That should be our priority."

All 50 states have safe haven laws, but only Nebraska's lacks an age limit. Nebraska's part-time Legislature is adjourned until January, but two state legislative committees will hold a joint hearing November 13 to discuss a remedy.

"They've got a huge problem," said Linda Spears, vice president for policy and public affairs for the Child Welfare League of America. "It's a pretty poorly constructed law to meet its original intent."

When it was introduced in the Legislature, the bill had a presumed age limitation of 72 hours, said Todd Landry, director of the state's Division of Children and Family Services.

"The original intent was to protect infants from the immediate danger of being harmed," he said.

However, the law's final language uses the word "child" and does not specify an age limit, leaving it open to interpretation. Other states' laws specify the maximum age at which a child may be relinquished, ranging from 72 hours in several states to 1 year in North Dakota, according to the National Center for State Courts.

"Clearly in these cases so far that we've seen, none of these children were in any immediate danger of being harmed," Landry said. "It is our opinion that the law does need to be modified."

The law is being abused, Heineman's statement said.

"Safe haven laws were not designed to allow families having

difficulty with older youth and teenagers to abandon their children or responsibilities as parents," he said.

The parents may not always be to blame, the Child Welfare League's Spears said.

"The original safe haven laws were created for young moms who are having babies who didn't know how to get help. I think these are families with older kids who don't know how to get help and who are in desperate need," she said.

Most state laws fail to provide for research into who is abandoning babies and why, league spokeswoman Joyce Johnson said.

"Those are the kinds of things we've been wondering about and saying we need to know more about, and you'll never know if you just have a law that says you can anonymously leave a child somewhere, no questions asked," Johnson said.

New Jersey, she said, is an exception. That state's safe haven law provides funding for research and evaluation as well as \$500,000 a year for public awareness, according to a September 2007 report by a New Jersey safe haven task force.

A woman who dropped her 15-year-old nephew at a Lincoln, Nebraska, hospital told CNN affiliate KETV last month that she and the boy's guardian could no longer handle his behavior problems. Watch woman explain why she left 15-year-old at hospital »

The woman, Cathy Poulin, said she tried discipline and medication, but nothing worked. The boy's mother died several years ago, and his father left him, she said.

"We had to go to the next level," Poulin said. "He can be made to get help."

The Omaha man who left his nine children, ages 1 to 17, at Creighton University Medical Center was overwhelmed by the

sudden death of his wife after the youngest child was born, he told KETV.

"I was with her for 17 years, and then she was gone. What was I going to do?" Gary Staton said. "We raised them together. I didn't think I could do it alone. I fell apart. I couldn't take care of them."

Staton is just the kind of parent whom safe haven laws fail to help, Johnson said.

"He was grieving, he didn't have a lot of money, and all those children – he was trying to figure out how to feed them, how to clothe them, and deal with the grief of losing his wife. He needed help," she said.

Heineman and Landry urged Nebraska parents who are having trouble coping to call the United Way's 211 resource line or Boys Town, a nationally known nonprofit child services organization based in Nebraska.

Other options include community and faith-based support groups, crisis hot lines, treatment centers and other services, Landry added.

By Jim Kavanagh

Children of the night...

What music they make...

In keeping with the Halloween season, I thought that line was appropriate. Bela Lugosi's role as [Dracula](#) still is one for the ages. Today, that movie seems quaint and common, but in 1931 it terrified the audience. I've been told and read that the 1922 silent movie [Nosferatu](#) was even more chilling. Someday I must see that film.

Other versions of Dracula were horrific, bad, funny and just plain campy. There was Dracula vs Frankenstein, Dracula vs Batman. There was a Son of Dracula (Young Dracula) and an Old Dracula. Dracula was even [Dead and Loving It](#). He even discoed in [Love at First Bite](#). Today there are many more vampire stories out there, they all started with Dracula.

Why this fascination? Hard to say. Terror lurks in dark places. We as a society gather in light areas. We bring light into the dark. We try to chase away all shadows. Vampires, werewolves and their ilk are creatures of the shadows and dark. They strike a nerve with us. They chill our bones. They the moral of a story. Live a good life and evil will not happen to you. Stay with the group, do not go off alone after dark. There is evil out there and it has a name.

Today, we try to scare ourselves and we call it fun. We have horror movies, haunted mazes and houses, horror books. Things designed to get a bit of thrill in our lives. Things designed to get our blood flowing.

I do love the Halloween season. I wish that our haunted theater had been a reality, now I have no plans for Halloween. I'm too old to go "Trick or Treating" and I know of costume parties yet. Last year, even without the party, I put on my Dracula cape and went around the local area. Maybe this year, I'll shop at Wal*Mart.

And what brought all this up...

The Children of the Night, what music they make... Owls in the trees, a dog or coyote howling in the distance on a chill dark night. Yes, the children of the night make music, and to my ears there is nothing better...

And yes, this is a [play](#) our theater should do... if we don't do a haunted house in October, we should at least do one themed play...

The Prankster

One of highlights of [The Office](#) outside of the main plot is the dynamic exhibited by Jim and Dwight. I just roll with each scheme that Jim cooks up to get Dwight week after week. Whether it be placing his desk essentials in jello (Episode One), playing a game of Hot and Cold for him to locate his desk (in the men's restroom), or using a stop watch to monitor his time wasting (oops, is that a SPOILER), Mr. Halpert is a master of the well-conceived and well-timed prank. Follow the [link](#) for a list of the best and feel free to comment on these or any that may be missing.

Getting To Know Gunner, Aarvid, And Kanute

Well, Tuesday and Thursday nights were auditions for the next

[WCCT](#) production. [Don't Hug Me](#) tells the story of a travelling karaoke machine ("LIFESTYLE SYSTEM") salesman who travels to the local tavern of a northern Minnesotan village on the coldest night of the year. I have not had the opportunity to read the entire script but what I read cold at the auditions was hilarious. We did not get the chance to sing any of the songs from the show but (judging by the titles) they will be great fun. "Don't Let The Door Hit You In The Butt" caught my attention as it was a song we skipped over during our readings.

Before the readings, we were encouraged to try a Minnesotan accent. I vaguely knew something, enough to make an attempt. Ya, you know. Watch [Fargo](#) and you will see (or [Drop Dead Gorgeous](#) which I have never seen) and you will know. I really like the part of Gunner. He is the owner of the tavern and is an outspoken, northwoods version of Archie Bunker. The fast-talking salesman Aarvid ([Head of the Class?](#)) could be fun as well as he is slightly reminiscent of a Harold Hill. We really did not get to learn much of the role of Kanute who seems to be a rather clueless character who is engaged to one of the two female characters.

Now... for the singing part of the audition. There was a keyboard on stage with a book of Broadway tunes open to "Getting to Know You" from [The King and I](#). Ok... it is a female piece but it was there so why not. Following my short off the cuff a capella excerpt, the director told me that "That was too good." AWriiighty then, I will do worse on Thursday... HAHAAHAHAHAHA. Unfortunately, the only person who got to sing was the one person who did not show up Tuesday night. In total there were 6 people who tried out. 4 men and two women. The cast calls for 5 (3 men and two women). I feel sorry for the one guy who does not get a part. If that turns out to be me... OH, WELL. However, I have all the confidence in the world that it will not be me.

[Blockbuster.com](#)

Wonderful Fall Day

Since I joined the YMCA (Anyone Feel like dancing here???, not me thanks!), Thursdays has been one of the days I stop after work to get a little exercise in. Today I just could not see dropping in. It was just too nice out. Still I needed to get a little exercise in and still enjoy the fall evening.

My youngest and I took a quick trip to [Harrison Lake State Park](#) and took a stroll around the lake. Roughly 3.5 miles of hiking. Not a bad way to spend the afternoon. There was a cross-country meet going on, so we had to find an out of the way spot to finally park. We were able to avoid most of the runners (not get in their way) and we had a good time walking.

The walk around the lake reminded me of the last time I took the full trip around the lake. It was quite a few years ago. My daughters always liked picnics at the park for birthdays and such. Since 3 out of 4 were born in months when picnics are in season, we did it quite often. Harrison Lake was one of the many parks we went to (They have swimming there). My wife and I made the trip around that lake once. That was some 15 or 16 years ago. I'm not sure why we never made the walk again, but we didn't. I remember that walk because I had 1 of my daughters in a baby carrier on my back. One of the best ways ever devised to carry children (except for the hair pulling). When the 2 in the middle were young enough, I remember having one in the back pack and one in a front carrier. That actually made it easier to walk. More balance.

Anyway back to the first walk some years ago. I remember we didn't know the park very well, and at one point we thought we

were going through peoples' back yards. At the time we may have been, but as of today, the park seems to own most of the trail around the lake. There were two stretches of the walk when we had to walk on the roads around the park. Slight safety issue for those trying this walk with children, but it is minimized.

One more thing on the runners, that will never be me...

7th to 7

No comments at all on the last blog post? I either posted this story before or I caught all of you on a bad day I guess. Anyway, I moved from 7th grade the other day to two different 2nd grade classes, and I do mean *different* in more ways than the obvious. Yesterday was generally a good day. I unfortunately had no break for specials like PE or music, but even without I didn't have much to complain about. There was an hour at the end of the day for computer lab and research, but though another ran that class I still had to be there. They were researching dinosaurs. Their entire day (well, almost) was actually based on this topic, from books to read for silent reading to centers work to the research at the end of the day. This topic is an early speller's nightmare by the way, with all those crazy names. I think I can spell some of the more common ones like T-Rex, er- I mean tyrannasaurus rex and pterodactyl. Those of course have come with practice. Let me just take a quick look at Wikipedia for some of the more unusual ones... Okay, just looking at [one single classification of dinosaurs](#) I found names like archaeornithomimus, anserimimus, struthiomimus, ornithomimus, pelecanimimus, shenzhousaurus, and harpymimus. Yech- see what I mean?

So again that day went well. A few students had to flip cards (oops, I mean "pull tickets" – small details like what things are called is of utmost importance to these concrete thinkers) but they were pretty well behaved. I wish I could say the same about today's class- some of them were all over the walls (figuratively). I would often have to repeat myself when I told someone to just sit down. Very chatty too. They did not seem to know how to do work with no talking. This is the sort of class I had when student teaching. The teacher also didn't leave directions for her behavior plan so I had to try to figure out how the one they had, one I was not familiar with, worked. They tried to tell me, but they couldn't agree on the details. I did mention doing things just right did I not? I had one boy who would just complain how I would do it. Needless to say I will not be using this plan if and when I have my own classroom someday.

This class also had no break, but there was a shorter lunch and less "off" (someone else in charge) time. In fact, the only time I had outside the classroom besides lunch was fifteen minutes to check out books in the LMC- they didn't even get recess outside of lunch. It wasn't in the plans, but even if it was they would have lost it. Needless to say between these two things the day felt quite longer than yesterday. Does this tell me I am not able to do it? Not at all. I think I need to come up with my own behavior plan next time rather than conform to the cooperating teacher's plan if I don't like it. That was probably also a mistake- trying to conform with how she ran things, automatically taking a follower (read: teaching assistant) role. Not good when I'm supposed to be training to be a leader. So, should I go back if the college agrees to give me another chance?